

SOUTH BAY USERS GROUP

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DYNAMIC MEMORIES

JANUARY 1987



SOUTH BAY USERS' GROUP

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LOOK PAY ATTENTION ** The next SBUG meeting will be held at the Saratoga library. The meeting dates will be as follows:

January 13th. (The second Tuesday)

February 1st. (The first Tuesday)

March 8th. (The second Tuesday. From this date on we hope to have all meetings on the second Tuesday of the month.

The time at least is constant // 19:15, otherwise known as seven fifteen P.M.

***** MEMBERSHIP

If you wish to become a member of SBUG and start receiving our newsletter DYNAMIC MEMORIES then send \$20 check or money order to the following address:

SOUTH BAY USERS' GROUP
P.O. BOX 60116
Sunnyvale, CA 94088

Or come to one of our meetings. We also perpetrate a bulletin board to which you will have access as a member of SBUG.

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If the need arises feel free to give anyone of us a call.

THE EDITOR THINKS

I will begin by not inflicting any New Years banalities upon you. Of course I expect you to be properly grateful for that. Irrespective of the year, DYNAMIC MEMORIES will be a little different. The fact that I have an XT compatible makes me more compatible with the current scene. I might even become a little bit techolcal. (Stop smiling, Bernie).

One of the things I have long wanted is a dot matrix printer. A lot of interesting things can be done with dot matrix that my sturdy and really excellent DAISYWRITER can't do. For some months COMPUTER SHOPPER had an ad for a 6 color dot matrix printer for \$199.00. I didn't buy it because I was afraid I might have trouble getting the proper driver for my Model 4. Now I have a compatible, I still don't know about the driver, and I don't have the money to buy the printer anyway.

**SBUG Financial Statement
December 20, 1986**

Receipts:	December	Y-T-Date	% Used	Budget
Members dues	40.00	849.00	84.90%	1000.00
SBUG BBS Dues	0.00	50.00	25.00%	200.00
Disk Library	0.00	122.00	101.87%	120.00
Load80	12.00	376.00	188.00%	200.00
Documentation	0.00	.00	.00%	40.00
Interest	0.00	21.40	71.33%	30.00
<hr/>				
Total Receipts	52.00	1418.40	89.21%	1590.00
 Disbursements:				
Phone	0.00	288.53	120.22%	240.00
Utilities	0.00	131.58	49.84%	264.00
Printing	38.42	888.74	190.76%	360.00
Postage	22.00	248.00	185.33%	150.00
P O Box	0.00	29.00	111.54%	26.00
Bank charges	4.00	28.00	77.78%	36.00
Disk Library	0.00	204.97	409.94%	50.00
Documentation	0.00	.00	.00%	80.00
SBUG BBS	0.00	.00	.00%	200.00
Misc. Expenses	0.00	13.00	26.00%	50.00
<hr/>				
Total Disbursements	84.42	1829.82	111.94%	1458.00
 Beginning Cash Balance	 320.82	 519.82	 100.00%	 519.62
 Net Receipts	 -12.42	 -211.42	 -157.78%	 134.00
 Ending Balance	 308.20	 308.20	 47.15%	 653.82

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT PUBLIC DOMAIN PROGRAMS

I joined PC SIG on a special offer they had. For my \$39 I became a member, got 2 books, a newsletter and 5 disks with public domain programs on them. The two books list public domain programs, the newsletter is a newsletter about the public domain area and the 5 disks contained the following;

COMPUTER TUTOR

PC FILE V4

PC WRITE 2.7/4

CHECKBOOK 2.1

CPA LEDGER DOCUMENTATION DISK [DISK 3 OF 3]

If you have not ventured into this field I am here to inform you that you don't get a great deal for nothing. If you're a dedicated hacker you will probably be able to make these programs run after a certain amount of study and -- hacking. If you are an humble applications user like myself, new to MSDOS the time spent trying to figure out how the program works without any documentation just isn't worth it. There must be a lot of people out there just like me, or these people wouldn't be able to make a living.

The discs referred to above are worthy of a few comments.

COMPUTER TUTOR. I can't make it run without the docs on it, so I don't know if it's worth my time (and money). Pass.

PC FILE. It comes with 110 pages of documentation. I printed them out and partially ran the program. It convinced me, and I sent the man my \$49.00. Here the price is right, the program looks good and will probably do more for me with fewer headaches and learning time than the expensive DB programs on the commercial market.

PC WRITE. This is the reverse. I read some of the documentation and it just isn't sophisticated enough for my uses. I am not writing a thousand pages a month in Hebrew, Tsee or Quechua but I am used to a certain level of expertise in a word processor. PCWRITE just doesn't appear to have it.

CHECKBOOK. It doesn't run without the documentation. That I understand. If it ran at all you wouldn't have to send the \$25.00 the lady would like to receive. About 20 pages of documentation can be printed from the disc and I have no doubt that it is a superior checkbook program. On the other hand I can find 822 checkbook programs written in basic that will cost me nothing but the typing and do all I have to do. As a matter of fact, if there were no check book program in the whole wide world, I could write one. The \$25.00 will stay in my pocket.

CPA LEDGER, This appears to answer my needs. The price is right, \$35.00, and it is certainly a more powerful program than my simple needs require.

Time goes by and inflation (government figures to the contrary notwithstanding) continues its vertiginous spiral. BUTTONWARE has advised me that PCFILE now costs \$64.00. I sent the rest of the money.

If I seem to carp about shareware that's not my intention. A lot of smart, hardworking people have put in a lot of time on these programs. In many cases they will do the job for a fraction of the cost of a similar commercial program.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND MSDOS AFTER ONLY A YEAR'S STUDY

Now something about MSDOS books. There are some good ones out there and I have 3 of them. Many people blunder or thunder ahead without printed assistance. I must have the manual. If one manual won't do it, then I get another. And then another. This is known as the manual approach to computing. I usually quit there. If 3 manuals won't do it I figure:

1. There aren't any good manuals.
2. The program isn't any good.
3. It isn't possible to write a manual that will make me understand this program.

The first book was recommended to me by Chris Oman. It sits permanently on top of my monitor. The name is "Making MSDOS & PC DOS Work for You" by The Human Connection. It says on the title page. I wonder if they call him Mr. Connection or if they just call him Human. Anyway it is an excellent text for a beginner. It is simple, complete enough, easy to use, written for the neophyte. It cost me \$14.95 at Computer Literacy.

The next is "Running MSDOS" by Van Wolverton. I'm pretty sure they call him Van. This is a very complete book. The subtitle is "Getting the most out of the standard operating system for the IBM PC and 50 other personal computers." That's about right. If you have studied the entire 423 pages of this book you should consider yourself a competent and complete MSDOS angler. This amazing author writes in English, not in Technocrese. If you are not a highly competent MSDOS user after studying this book you belong in category 3 of my 3 manual approach. (See above) It cost me \$18.95 at Computer Literacy and I will lend it to you if you are willing to leave a \$20.00 deposit.

There is a rewriting of the Model 4 manual advertised in 80MICRO for \$9.95 as being written in English. I haven't seen it but aside from (possibly) that book, there is nothing in the Model 4 literature that is readable without having the obligatory bottle of [extra strength] Tylenol near at hand.

Better yet in your hand.

The next book I recommend is also by the straight forward Mr. Wolverton. (Van) It is called "Supercharging MSDOS". It is subtitled "The Microsoft Guide to High Performance Computing for the Experienced PC User". Once again the subtitle is amply explicative and totally correct with one exception. Because he writes in English it isn't really necessary to be all that experienced to use this book.

The following is an example of his style from pages 329-330 of "Running MSDOS"

"RENAMING THE FORMAT COMMAND"

"If you're using a fixed disk it's possible to erase all files on the disk by inadvertently formatting it. The scenario goes like this: The fixed disk (drive C) is the current drive; you want to format a disk so you put it in drive A and type >format< but forget to add a: to the command. You have told DOS to format the disk in the current drive (the fixed disk). DOS displays its message warning you that formatting the disk erases all files. Believing that the disk to be formatted is the disk in drive A, you press the ENTER key. DOS dutifully formats the fixed disk, removing everything stored on it.

"Although it's not likely you would make both these errors (forget to type a: and tell DOS to go ahead without checking), and even though newer versions of DOS give an explicit warning if the disk to be formatted is a fixed disk, the consequences are severe enough that you should consider protecting yourself against the possibility. The technique is fairly simple: Rename the Format command file, and create a batch file named FORMAT that always formats the disk in drive A. The following commands do it (assuming the current directory is the root directory on the fixed disk):

```
C>rename format.com xformat.com
C>copy con format.bat
xformat a: %1 %2 %3
*Z
```

1 file(s) copied

"To format a disk in drive A with this batch file, you just type >format<; there's no chance of formatting the disk in the current drive."

I don't think it could be written more clearly. There is no reason that a MSDOS beginner like myself shouldn't take advantage of the sometimes complicated procedures possible under MSDOS 3.1 using SUPERCHARGE MSDOS.

The latest (January) COMPUTER SHOPPER has an article on the invasion of the American computer market by Hyundai. Will

we soon be driving down the street in our Hyundai automobile to our jobs at the office where we use our Hyundai computer? Can Hyundai apple pie be far behind?

ELECTRIC PENCIL (a word processor)

This is a sort of review of ELECTRIC PENCIL for MSDOS. Some of you will remember ELECTRIC PENCIL as it ran on the Model III. To the best of my knowledge it was the first of the word processors. It was very good in its time. It was not very sophisticated but it had no bugs and it was dead easy to learn. All the commands were on two pages. If you were writing letters or simple text and didn't wish to become involved with computers but wanted the speed and facility that computers give for word processing, ELECTRIC PENCIL was the your program.

When I saw PENCIL for MSDOS advertised in 80MICRO at \$49.95 I sent for it and I am putting out this newsletter with it. In all that follows I compare it with ALLWRITE which is hard to beat.

PENCIL has two major functions missing. One I miss sorely and I cannot understand why it has been left out because I know that it cannot be difficult to implement. VC or vertical centering. What this means is that if your document has 20 lines (for instance) it will be centered in the middle of your 66 line sheet of paper. SCRIPSIT has it, ALLWRITE has it, ELECTRIC PENCIL doesn't. PENCIL does have an excellent WYSIWYG. I just hit Alt-F and I can see just exactly how the document will appear when printed. The hard disk makes this very fast, and the 13" screen makes it very visible. I then count the lines on the screen, subtract from 66 divide by two and run down that many lines of the printer. It doesn't take long but ;vc used to do all that for me with ALLWRITE.

What do most people write? One page letters, notes and documents. To me this is an example of a design where nobody thought to figure what the public needs most. The other missing function, proportional printing is another thing. It doesn't come cheap and it's not surprising that PENCIL doesn't have it.

PENCIL has a lot, however. A really first class spelling checker (100,000 words!!) is included. In all respects it is better than ELECTRIC WEBSTER which I thought and think was very good. How is it better? To begin with it's much faster. As you see, the vocabulary is much larger. If you have some words that you constantly misspell (who amongst us may throw the first stone?) the checker will learn those if you wish and correct them automatically after consulting with you. Very nice.

The single word checker is another cute one. At any time while in the text entering mode, if you doubt the spelling of a given word, place the cursor over the word and hit Alt-X.

If you get a beep the spelling is right, otherwise the dictionary will appear and you may look for the correct spelling. An unlimited amount of words may be added to the dictionary and if you are a technocrat of some kind you may make up your own special dictionary with the uncommon words applicable to your science. Altogether the spelling checker is a quality operation equal to, or better than higher priced word processors.

PENCIL operates in 3 basic modes-- text entering, operations and printing. It's easy to go from one to another, but if you're in a hurry you can get confused and the process can be a little clumsy at times. There are two other modes, the tutor and the proofreader but these are optional to the user. It is written in machine language, hence its speed. If you've spent as much time as I have waiting for the disks to grind out a long document so it can be printed, the whoos-h-h that PENCIL sends the text to the printer with is very gratifying.

ALLWRITE had a special feature so that specific printer codes could be utilized using the ASCII code. So, relieved sigh, has PENCIL, as a matter of fact it has two but one is enough for me. As long as I can print $\frac{1}{2}$ instead of $\frac{1}{2}$ I'm happy.

The word processor keys on the number pad come in handy and I should get used to them in another month. On the other hand I'm used to doing a number on a number of things on the number pad of the Model 4. Num Lock has me a little Num(b). I frequently number when I should process and process when I should number. Oh well, another month.

There is an imbedded command feature. It's very simplistic compared with ALLWRITE but PENCIL works differently and doesn't need so many. ALLWRITE will make columns, PENCIL will not. Both will make headers and footers. Apparently there's some way to switch the headers on odd and even pages using PENCIL but I haven't figured it out yet.

PENCIL wins easily with the macros. ALLWRITE has them too, but is limited by the Model 4 keyboard. SUPERLOG came out with a setup permitting me to use up to 18000 bytes in macros. It worked and worked fine, but if I used the memory for that I had no memory left for a number of other things I wanted to do. With PENCIL I can use 2 key combinations. ALT-M is MSDOS. Alt-S is SBUG. Alt-C is CP/M. These are some key stroke combinations that I use all the time and that annoy me. None of these are worth the re-learning for a 60 word a minute typist. Alt-T which I have as "Thank you for your cooperation." is very much worth the learning. I use that phrase a lot because practically everybody cooperates with me.

The search and replace function is fast, but no faster than ALLWRITE. The latest thing I have encountered that works very well is automatic hyphenating.

PENCIL has an automatic hyphenating feature which may be altered with imbedded commands. I haven't bothered to change the existing parameters. As it is it avoids the worst features of justified printing without proportional printing with such words as discombobulated and antidisestablishmentarianism.

One thing I miss from ALLWRITE is the automatic save feature. This could be set by the user but I always went with the parameter as it came. This automatically saved every 50 lines. It wasn't really every 50 lines because ALLWRITE had its own way of calculating lines, but it was just the right amount as far as I was concerned. If you made a lot of changes while writing a 20 line letter you would easily reach 50 lines. PENCIL will let you set a time period. If you set it for 5 minutes, PENCIL will save your text automatically every 5 minutes. I don't like this very much. Sometimes I don't write anything for 5 minutes. On the other hand you can save your product as often as you wish just by pressing F 4. On a hard disk it's so fast that no time is lost. Nevertheless the automatic save is a much better way to go.

I find that with PENCIL'S format command I can do a good job of proof reading, something I could not do with ALLWRITE. With ALLWRITE I had to print out anything over a page in length. With PENCIL I am getting into the habit of running format on everything I do, then running the spelling checker.

Blocks are beautifully handled by ALLWRITE. The commands are simple yet anything you conceivably could wish to do with blocks is there. PENCIL does not handle blocks nearly as well. With ALLWRITE I frequently snaffled a block from one file and inserted it in another. Very easy. PENCIL will delete files easily. It will also change their location within a file easily. If you wish to copy a block from a file to a file, you have to go through the cut and paste buffer. The cut and paste buffer will do a lot of tricky things, limited only by your imagination, but it's not completely simple, it takes a little learning. Curiously the Index has no reference under "block". You have to look up marker.

This brings me to the tutor. F 1 brings most of the commands in common use onto the screen. This has to be recognized as one of the strong points of PENCIL. While in the tutor mode (where the commands are displayed) more information will be printed on the screen as well as a page reference to the manual, simply by pressing the keys(s) for that particular command. The whole organization of this help facility is extremely well thought out. I don't see how it could be better. One for PENCIL.

In synthesis, the mnemonics of ALLWRITE are better as is the block handling. PENCIL lacks one essential function, vertical centering. It also lacks proportional printing, but

that's a lot to ask for \$50.00. PENCIL'S spelling corrector is superb, its speed, because of the hard disk and the 8+ Mhz makes ALLWRITE on the 4 look like a Model T, well make that a Model A, running at Indianapolis. It's a good program. If you flunked spelling anywhere between the fifth and the eighth grade or if you have a dictionary phobia, it might be worth your while just for the spelling checker.

In the meantime; ALT-T-- Thank you for your cooperation.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is being produced with ELECTRIC PENCIL for MSDOS. I didn't mean to startle you that just happens to be the case. I used to use ALLWRITE on the 4. Most of you will notice that this does not have proportional printing and ALLWRITE does. Elsewhere in this issue you will find a sort of one buttock review of PENCIL. It is my intention to produce the February issue with MICROSOFT WORD which does have proportional printing.

Why do I do this? Give a general an airplane and he's going to find someone to drop bombs on. Give me a word processor and I'm going to turn out a newsletter with it. If a man has a tool he's going to find a use for it. At least none of my newsletters have ever killed anyone. Not that I know of.

As I wend my way tortuously through MSDOS I discover little bits and pieces of reasonableness (reasonability?) in the system. I now appreciate the reason for sub-directories. I may become the subdirectory king, possibly emperor.

I am encountering some problems. If I have loaded SIDE-KICK I can't PARK the hard disk. I get a message "unknown system, cannot park." For the time being I reboot and then park. Something like being in San Francisco. Occasionally the keyboard freezes and I cannot even reboot with ALT-CTRL-DEL. I have to turn off the machine and reboot with the turn-on switch. It seems to be associated with this program, ELECTRIC PENCIL, but I'm not sure.

On the plus side I believe that once I get used to them it will be very handy to use the "word processor" keys on the numeric keypad. I have a feeling it will be a long time before I get into programs such as SYMPHONY and RBASE-5000. The good news on that side is that there are a lot of public domain programs. When you register and get the manual you wind up paying just about what you used to pay for Model III programs.

December 3. Still having trouble with the machine turning itself off. It's not consistent. It's definitely not ELECTRIC PENCIL that does it. It happened while I was working with something else yesterday. Sometimes the cursor continues to blink but none of the keys will function. Sometimes

ALT-CTRL-DEL will reboot, sometimes I have to turn off the main switch to reboot. Today I turned my back for a few minutes, and when I turned again the screen had gone blank, the letters I had typed had disappeared from the screen.

December 11th. The trouble with the computer is the turbo mode. This beast runs at 8.586 Mhz according to a speed checking program I have. I've taken it back twice. The company changes the board and returns it to me the next day. I got it back day before yesterday and it froze once the same day. Since then I have spent about 20 hours in turbo and had no trouble with the freezing -- that the keyboard will not respond to any key. I have had some troubles with the 'print' and 'system' screens on this program. Most of the information was not available on these screens when I entered them. I am familiar with the commands and they were obeyed. I exited PENCIL, returned, and the screens were O.K. again. I'll continue to test.

December 16th. Took Xavier back to the shop. This time I spoke directly to the technician. I was told it would be ready in two days. I'm not unhappy because these things happen when you get into high tech. As long as the company is giving me the service they are giving me (one and two day turnarounds!!!!!!) don't see that I have any complaint. Of course I hope they get it right soon.

December 18th. I got the computer back yesterday. There was a note saying they had swapped out two chips. The beastie has been on continuously in my waking hours and there have been no failures.

ON THE DECEMBER SWAP MEET

I went late, about 3'clock. A few of the tables were empty but most were still doing business. Disks were being sold at a number of places for 29 cents, the same price advertised by the rock bottom boys in COMPUTER SHOPPER. xt clones have dropped a little more also. I think that my configuration, 2 floppies, 20 meg HD, 640K ram, color monitor and card could be had for about \$1200. With these computers the guarantee is everything. I have had Xavier Tarragon in the shop a number of times. I don't get upset about that. I have always gotten it back the next day except this time when it took two days. Compare that to TANDY. Compare it to anybody.

The final roundup on the show; if you wanted to buy something specific (and I saw a lot of bundles going towards the street) then you should have gone. if you wanted to see something new, something startling I think I've told you all there was in the first paragraph.

I bought a program called ABLE. Right now I'm unable to figure out why. When I've worked with it a little maybe I'll be

able to tell you why. Or more likely I will have to go to the confessional, "Father, forgive me, I just can't help buying useless programs." Or to the couch, "I understand I'm just punishing myself buying these useless programs. Even as a boy I used to buy all the marbles none of the rest of the kids wanted."

FLICKERFREE

A Review

FLICKERFREE is a program from Steve Gibson of light pen fame. Steve is one of the admirable figures on the computer scene. There are others but there are also as many bype artists, shoddy prestidigitators and slimy promoters as you would find at the world coofereoce of carnival operators.

As the name indicates, FLICKERFREE eliminates the annoying flicker that comes with scrolling, especially on a color monitor. I think it best to quote from the cover of the manual.

- > ELIMINATE SCROLLING FLICKER
With all IBM compatible color display adaptors
- > INCREASE DISPLAY SPEED
With both monochrome and color by 200% to 1500%, includes a throttle to limit display speed.
- > CONTROL TEXT COLOR
Permanently set Text and Background colors with complete, fast, and easy on-screen menus.
- > 100% COMPATIBLE WITH ALL IBM PC AND COMPATIBLE computers with color, monochrome and built in adapters. NOT FOR USE WITH EGA/PGA adapters.
- > FULL SATISFACTION GUARANTEE
Full refund if not delighted.

I cannot honestly say that I am delighted, but I am certainly well pleased even though I have a problem. The program comes with a utility called FFIX. Again I quote.

"FLICKERFREE Fixer, FFIX allows applications software which would not otherwise function with FLICKERFREE technology to operate correctly. Since 99.99% of applications software functions without FFIX you may never need to use it, but it's here just in case."

FLICKERFREE works great with everything but ELECTRIC PENCIL. FFIX doesn't help. According to the manual the only program that they have run across that needs FFIX is HAYES SMARTCOM. In a memo that comes on the program disk they mention

that PC-WRITE needs FFIxing too. I will write Mr. Gibson to tell him that ELECTRIC PENCIL is messing him up. No, it's not me. The instructions for installing FFIx are simple and I followed them. Simply.

State of S.B.U.G (or state of dis-union)

by Gerald F. McKee

We have undergone quite a metamorphosis. From an eager, mushrooming, flock of neophyte computerists who (fortunately, or unfortunately) chose the Radio Shack TRS-80 as our vehicle, we have changed! Boy, have we changed! Few of us still have ONLY the Model 1. Fewer still have not supplemented Radio Shack systems with MSDOS systems or some other heritage. In fact, most current and past members, (who no longer darken our door) have disposed of all things Radio Shack, and seemingly feel we have nothing in common with them. They have taken the skills, wisdom, and software treasures off to never-never land, depriving us of their newfound wisdom, feeling we MUST have nothing worthwhile to offer them in exchange! It's true, we do NEED some to return, just as we need NEW members, but what we REALLY need MORE of, has not changed! We need computerists, and would-be computerists, who would SHARE of themselves, regardless of the nameplate on the system they are using at the moment! What would (should) you join SBUG for?

(prospective members as well as former and current members can take this quiz!)

1. Education? Would you accept a hand from someone, to learn, how to make that new system you have, function? Would you?..... give such a person a hand up, if asked?

2. Could you use tutoring in the fine art of programming?

In Basic?
In Fortran?
In COBAL?
In Forth?
In Assembly?
In ADA?

Would YOU?..... tutor us, in one or more of these languages, if you understood and use them?

3. Software?

Would you?..... loan us your own prize program for evaluation?

Would you?..... explain how it works, so that we might choose to use it to solve our own software needs?

Would YOU?..... type-in one program a month from your favorite magazine, or write your own, for others here to share?

4. Communications?

Would you?..... obtain a communications Modem & join us on a Club Bulletin Board for the purpose of sharing your problems and solutions to computing problems, as they develop?

Would you?..... get on such a media to deliver your ideas furthering the art of computing?

Would you?..... sell the neophyte computerist on the fine points of BBS communicating, in order to nurture our club?

5. Hardware?

If you purchased a system, or components for one,

Would you?..... share your experience with us (good or bad) so that we might make the right choice? If you had a system crash, would you want someone to help you get it resolved?

Would you?..... help someone else solve their problem, if you could?

6. Saving money? If you just found this \$275.00 item you really wanted to buy;

Would you?..... be willing to group-buy the same item for \$150.00, if all it took was your effort to screen the SBUG membership for others with the same need?

7. Paying your way? This may seem like a weird one to include, but it MUST be addressed. Ever see a city, without a government? a church, without a pastor? a classroom, without a teacher? an operation without a surgeon? No? Well, you CANNOT see an SBUG without a committee to function as a steering body, either!

Would you?..... accept one of the Steering Committee tasks you could do, if asked, in order to keep this group going?

The original question again, should you be an SBUG member? If the answer to each of these questions was 'YES', and still is 'YES', then regardless of the systems you use, we NEED YOU, and you NEED US!

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FIRST CLASS MAIL